4: Marcoy T-5 (ca. 1865) 1875 SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

The colour of these natives recalled that of old mahogany. A thick rough mane of hair covered their shoulders. The man was decorated on each cheek with tattoo-marks of a deep blue, produced with the juice of the *Pseudo-Añil indigofera*, the design of which somewhat resembled the Chinese letters on a tea-chest. He wore round his neck a necklace made of three or four rows of monkeys' teeth mounted on an osier framework; a brassart of woven cotton, ornamented with a bunch of yellow feathers and surmounted with a crest composed of the long feathers of the ara, was fastened just below the shoulder of each arm; bracelets of a similar material, but without the *pompon* or crest, encircled his legs above the ankles; and a peculiar girdle round his loins completed his attire. In his hand he carried a lance of palm-wood, with a notched point. The woman had neither the hieroglyphic marks on her face nor

CANOE OF THE TICUNA INDIANS ON THE RIVER AYACOARI.

the crested bracelets on her arm. She wore a necklace of red glass beads, acquired in one of her husband's transactions with the Brazilians. A band of woven cotton adorned the lower part of her legs, and a belt of the same material, none too wide, encircled her loins.

This little group, dimly seen in the faint light of the quebrada, and standing out in relief against the rich back-ground of vegetation, through which the blue sky was here and there visible, presented a charming subject for a sketch, of which I proceeded to take advantage. Having stopped the canoe, my companion amused the two Ticunas while I set to work to paint them. Puzzled by my occupation as much as by the intentness with which I regarded them, the couple exchanged some observations in an idiom with which I was unacquainted, and in the utterance of which they appeared to use their throat rather than their tongue. The gutturals of Hebrew, the double consonants of the Quichua tongue, the G, the Jotas and the X of the Castilian, are sounds of the softest melody compared with the vocal gurgling of these Ticunas,

4: Marcoy T-5 (ca. 1865) 1875 SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

whose words I afterwards tried to express in musical notation, despairing ever to write them in syllables. 194

Like most of the river-tribes, these Ticunas understood the Tupi dialect, and spoke 191

TYPICAL PORTRAIT OF A TICUNA INDIAN.

142 301 304 302

it a little. Our men learned, from their inquiries as to our unexpected meeting at such an hour, that the natives had visited their plantation in order to gather the banana and yucca which they were then taking home. This store, providing sustenance for a week, assured them of passing the whole of this time in idleness, swinging in a ham- 222

The master of the hut then addresses the stranger, and in the hollow ventriloquial tones peculiar to the Ticunas, asks, "Who are you?—Where do you come from?—Are you friend or foe?—What brings you here?" The stranger satisfies these inquiries one after the other; or, more frequently, his visit having only a commercial aim, is content to answer by exhibiting the articles he brings, and which he desires to exchange for the products of Ticuna industry. The arms are then cast aside in order to discuss the value of the goods offered and those wanted; it will be readily understood that the discussion is intermingled with numerous requisitions on the caïsuma. The articles of Ticuna industry consist of yucca-flour, blowing-pipes, hammocks, hunting-poison, and coarse cotton goods.

Some young girls with short-cut hair whom we had noticed among the Ticunas led us for a moment to believe that they shared the custom of cropping with the Yahuas; but the information we obtained on this subject disabused us of the notion. The cropped pate of these young girls was only the visible sign of their having attained the age of puberty, and was the complement of the mysterious practice which the tribes of the Plain of Sacramento, and notably the Conibos, call *Schébianabiqui*. The Ticunas name it *Ihiéboah*, an expression which is less humorous than the other, and which may be translated "young girl," from *ihié*, woman, and *boah*, child.

After translating the word, it remains to describe the custom itself.

When the matrons find that a female child has attained puberty, they take possession of the young girl, conduct her in a procession to a hut built in a lonely place for the purpose, shut her up in it after providing some food and a vessel of water, and then leave her for forty-eight hours, the victim of *ennui* or her reflections. At the expiration of this time the matrons come to deliver their prisoner; but before giving her complete liberty, they rub her head with the milky juice of a *ficus*, which instantaneously coagulates, and forms, under the rotatory motion of the palms of their hands, a multitude of little balls, within which is entangled the hair of the young girl. These little balls, which the matrons snatch away one by one for amusement, tear away the hair with them, and make the patient scream with pain; two musicians, with their backs to the entrance of the hut, play an accompaniment to this proceeding on the flageolet and tambourine.

When the head of the victim has been thus completely stripped, the women cover it with a hood of yellow feathers, the shape of which reminds one of a species of toadstool (*Boletus*); in the centre of this is fixed a plume of feathers from the tail of the ara. Thus accoutred, the young girl, frightened and crying, is first led round the village, and then conducted in succession to the river-side and the forest, continually followed by the matrons, who whip her roughly with green boughs in order to harden her against the trouble to come.

After several hours of wandering in this manner, and an indefinite number of draughts of caïsuma which the young girl is forced to drink, they introduce her into a hut where a new hammock has been slung for the purpose. Utterly broken down with fatigue, drunkenness, and the switchings so unsparingly administered, she tumbles into the swinging net and immediately falls into a profound sleep. In the meantime, the assembled nation celebrates, with games and a remarkable consumption of fermented liquor, the Ihiéboah fete.